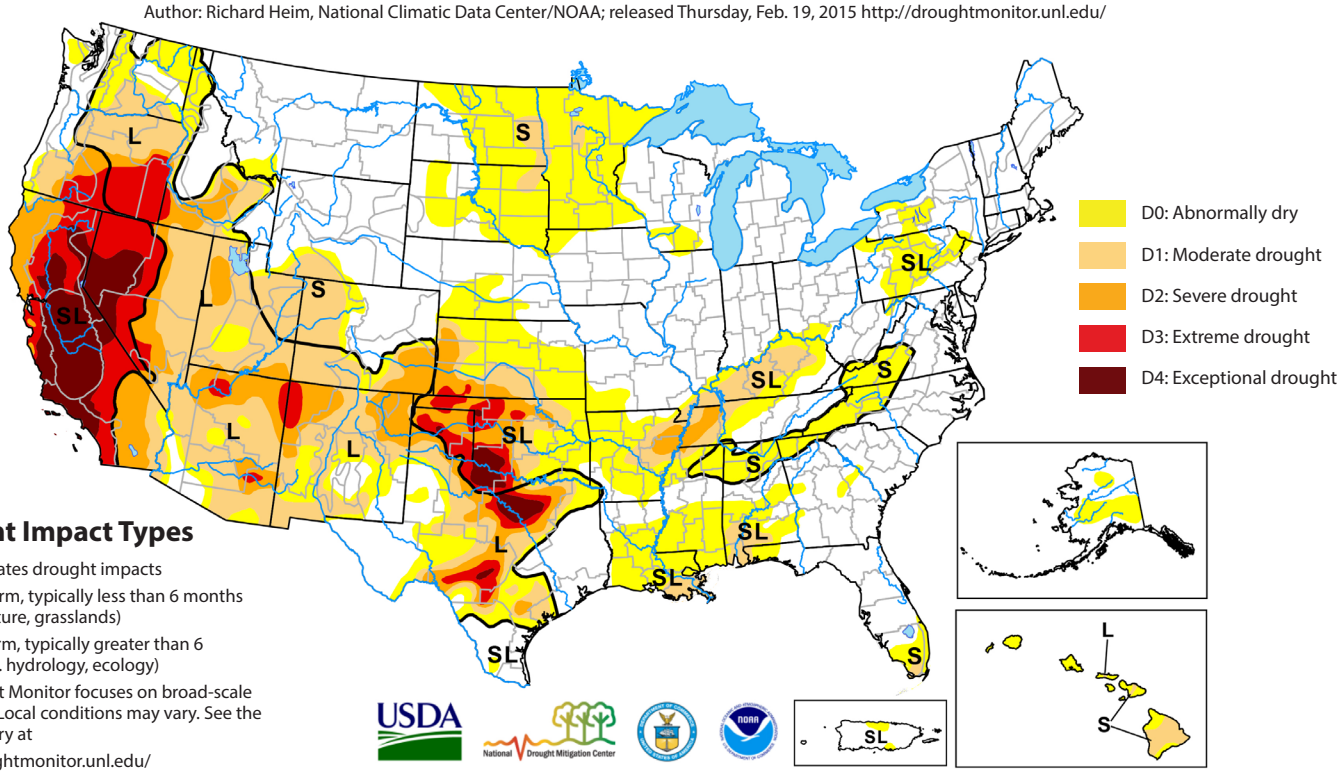
National Drought Outlook

February 2015

U.S. Drought Monitor, February 17, 2015

Author: Richard Heim, National Climatic Data Center/NOAA; released Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015 http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/



Drought Impact Types

Delineates drought impacts

S = Short-term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)

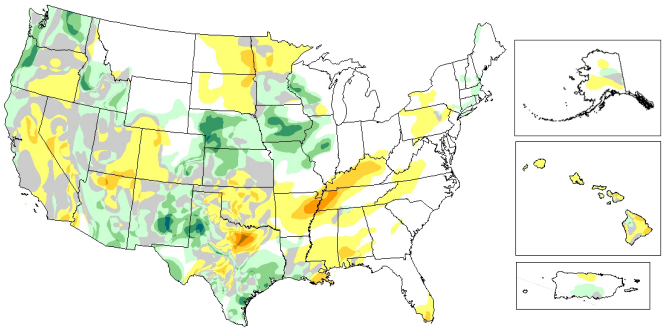
L = Long-term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See the text summary at http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/

This week's summary: Currently about 32% of the contiguous U.S. is in moderate (D1) to exceptional (D4) drought. About 35% of the contiguous U.S. was classified as D1-D4 at this time last year. D4, the most extreme category, covers a bit more than 3% of the contiguous U.S., compared to this time last year when bit more than 1% of the country was experiencing exceptional drought (D4).

How drought has changed in a year

Feb. 17, 2015 compared to Feb. 18, 2014



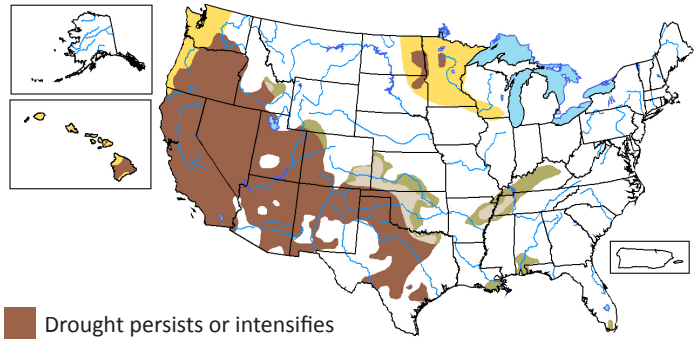
Degradation	Improvement
-4 classes	+1 class
-3 classes	+2 classes
-2 classes	+3 classes
-1 class	+4 classes
no change	

The map shows change in the status of drought classifications D1-D4 over the past 12 months with yellow and brown areas showing worsening conditions and green areas showing improvement. Gray areas indicate no change since February 2014.

http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/MapsAndData/ChangeMaps.aspx

Drought outlook through May, 2015

Released Feb. 19, 2015; http://go.usa.gov/hHTe



- Drought persists or intensifies
- Drought remains but improves
- Drought removal likely
- Drought development likely

Author: Adam Allgood
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/
Climate Prediction Center
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/

The outlook indicates likely development of drought in the western Oregon and Washington, the upper Midwest and Hawaii. Drought is likely to persist through most of the West and Southwest, especially California, Nevada and eastern Oregon. Improvement is forecast for southeast Colorado, Kansas, central Oklahoma and the south central states.

Outlook Partners

National Interagency Fire Center
www.nifc.gov
National Drought Mitigation Center
drought.unl.edu
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NOAA/National Climatic Data Center
http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov
USDA/Farm Service Agency
www.fsa.usda.gov

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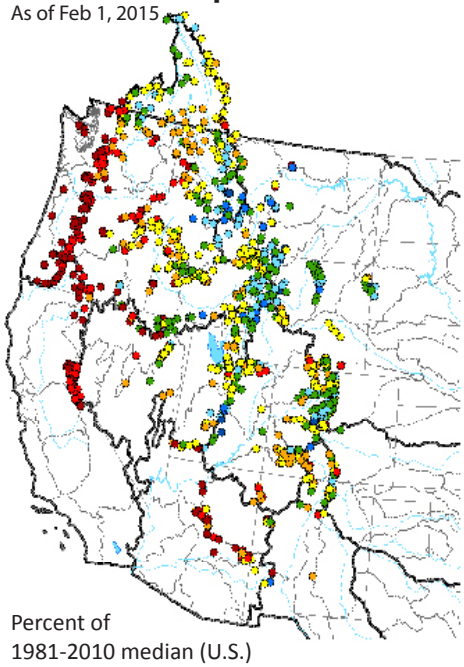
Snowpack

Mountain snowpack

As of Feb 1, 2015



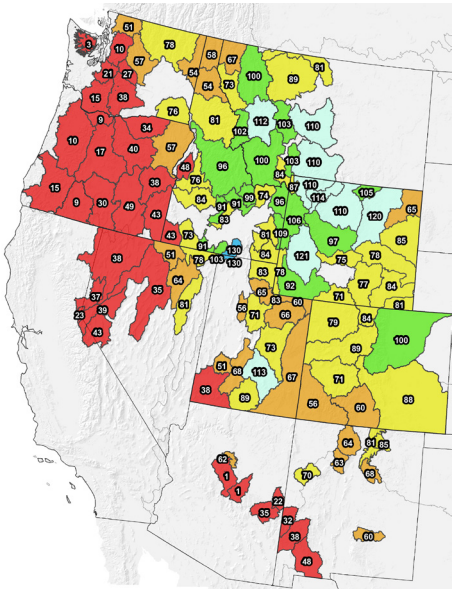
Percent of
1981-2010 median (U.S.)
1981-2010 average (Canada)

- 150-180%
- 130-149%
- 110-129%
- 90-109%
- 79-89%
- 50-69%
- 25-49%
- <25%

Snow-water equivalent as % of normal

As of Feb 19, 2015

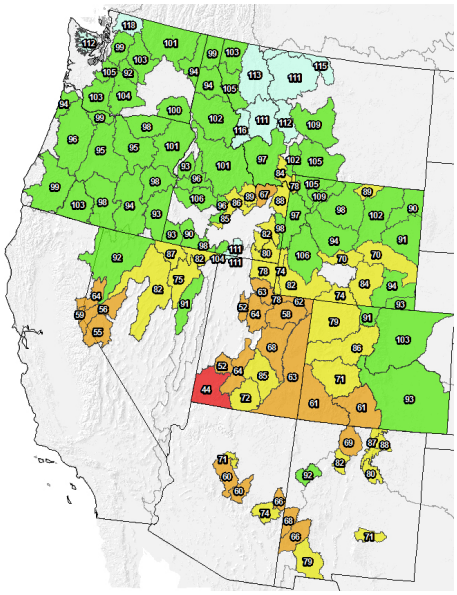
The snow-water equivalent percent of normal represents the current snow-water equivalent found at selected SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day.



Precipitation since Oct. 1 as % of normal

As of Feb 19, 2015

The water-year-to-date precipitation percent of normal represents the accumulated precipitation found at select SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day.



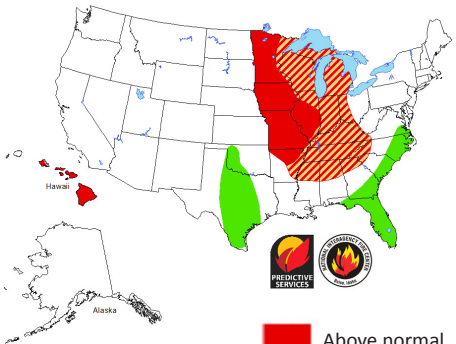
- unavailable
- <50%
- 50-69%
- 70%-89%
- 90%-109%
- 110%-129%

All snowpack maps from http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov; provisional data, subject to revision

Warmer temperatures, such as those documented in recent years, drive winter precipitation to fall as rain rather than snow. Even with normal, or in some places above normal precipitation, the snowpack in the Northwest and Far West is significantly below average for this time of year. These areas depend on the accumulation of snow over the winter to feed reservoirs and supply irrigation and other hydrological needs over the typically drier summer months. Impacts from lower snow accumulations and reduced springtime snowmelt can include lack of recharge to depleted reservoirs, reduction in soil moisture, moisture stress on high elevation vegetation, increased wildfire potential, reduced flows to junior water rights holders, and greater challenges in managing reservoir levels to ameliorate flooding, maintain fisheries and support recreation.

Wildfire potential

For April and May 2015



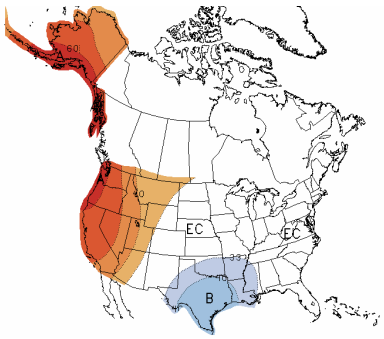
Relatively dry conditions in the Midwest and central states have led to heightened chances of spring wildfires.

- Above normal
- Below normal
- Normal
- Increasing to above normal

http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov

Chances for normal temps, precipitation

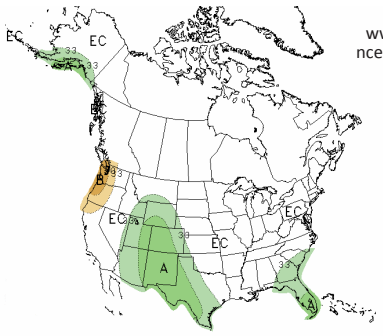
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov



Temperature outlook

March/April/May 2015

White areas show equal chances for above-normal, normal or below-normal temps; **orange** areas show higher chances for above-normal temperatures; **blue** areas show higher chances for below-normal temperatures. EC means "equal chances."



Precipitation outlook

March/April/May 2015

White areas show equal chances for above-normal, normal or below-normal precip; **green** areas show higher chances for above-normal precipitation; **brown** areas show higher chances for below-normal precipitation. EC means "equal chances."

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